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Public Comments on Next Generation 911; Text-to-911; Next Generation 911 Applications:=====

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Comment: The proposed rule is essential to the health and safety of millions of Americans who have barriers to hearing and/or speaking. Investigators at the School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley* examined the communication barriers and needs of Deaf and hard-of-hearing populations. Results showed that an estimated 48 million Americans are Deaf or hard-of-hearing. Substantial research documents such populations suffer disproportionate rates of death, injury and property loss during disasters and other health emergencies. When these populations cannot text to 911, they may lack access to critical help from first responders, as has been documented in past emergencies. For many years, members of these populations and organizations that represent them have advocated for the ability to send text messages to 911. The proposed rule should be approved as soon as possible to protect the lives of people who cannot effectively use traditional 911 communication.

*This study was supported by a Preparedness and Emergency Response Research Center (PERRC) grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, under FOA RFA-TP-08-001, to the University of California at Berkeley (grant number 5P01TP000295).

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